2:Oberg E-5 (1946-1947)1949 SK7 Guana SK7
Terena

The Terena and the Caduveo Southern

By Kalervo Oberg

INTRODUCTION

This brief monograph has grown out of an attempt to outline the cultural changes resulting from the contact and interaction of two culturally different Indian tribes and their eventual adjustment to the impact of European civilization. It must be stated at the outset that no continuous record of change can be given. We see the historical process rather in discontinuous flashes as it is revealed to us by writers who obeerved the life of these two tribes in the past. Even with the documentary evidence on hand the story of any given period of time is incomplete, for the observers did not record all those details of culture which we now consider so essential. Yet, with all these shortcomings, we do see the general outlines of development, the major turning points in the sequence of changes initiated by the outstanding forces of contact and interaction. It must be added, furthermore, that this monograph is considered more in the nature of a preliminary outline of a project which, it is hoped, will be completed by the Brazilian students who have participated in the work so far.

Discussion of the historical literature referring to the Terena and Caduveo is not considered necessary here, for this has been ably done by Alfred Métraux in Volume 1 of the Smithsonian Institution's Handbook of South American Indians. In tracing the early history of these two tribes recourse has been made to the ideas and documented evidence set forth in the Handbook. Quotations from early writers, Spanish, Portuguese, and French, have been used where they refer directly to cultural characteristics or changes re-

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INTRODUCTION

sulting from contact. These quotations have been translated into English, the writer being responsible for the translations. Admittedly, the early phases, covering a period of nearly four centuries, are vague. In fact, direct field methods can reach back with certainty for only the life span of a mature informant.

During some period in pre-Columbian times, the Terena, as a subtribe of the Arawak-speaking Guaná, moved southward into the northern Chaco from the Amazon Basin. From the earliest written records and from what we know of the Arawak-speaking peoples in the Amazon Basin, the Guaná were a relatively peaceful and predominantly agricultural people. In the Chaco the Guaná came into contact with the Guaicurú-speaking Mbayá of which the Caduveo formed a part. The Mbayá were predominantly hunters and extremely warlike. In time, the interaction between the Guaná and Mbayá led to a symbiotic relationship based on intermarriage between Mbayá chiefs and Guaná women of chiefly rank, exchange of goods, and the rendering of services by the Guaná for military protection provided by the Mbayá. In this system of accommodation the Mbayá maintained a position of ascendancy owing to their military superiority. This seems to have been the existing situation when the Spaniards made contact with the Guaná and Mbayá around the middle of the sixteenth century.

Although we do not know the exact location of the Guaná tribes at this date, we know from the account of Sanchez Labrador that in 1767 they were settled along the Paraguay River from lati-

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[Chaco Period]

THE TERENA

(Pls. 1-11)

TERENA ECONOMY IN THE CHACO

HABITAT

Although it is no longer possible to determine by direct investigation the exact nature of the economy of the Terena upon their entry into the Chaco, indirect evidence points to agriculture as being the basis of subsistence. The Terena are an Arawak-speaking people and the Arawak-speaking tribes in the Amazon Basin are predominantly agriculturists. Terena myths tell of how *Yúrikoyuvakái* taught the people to practice agriculture:

> The Indians were hungry but they had no tools and did not know how to obtain food. The twins then gave the Indians all their tools. To the men, *Yúrikoyuvakái* gave the ax, *povóoti;* the digging stick, *ilomé'i;* the knife, *piritou;* the sickle, *yopilocóti;* the war club, *puló'oi;* the bow, *shokid;* arrows, *shumé;* and the spear, *esiké.* To the women, the twins gave the spindle, *hopóe. Yúrikoyuvakái* then taught the Indians how to hunt, fish, and grow crops.

We know, too, from old records, that the Arawak-speaking neighbors of the Terena were agriculturists. Thus, although no direct written or verbal evidence exists concerning the original nature of Terena economy it appears reasonably safe to assume that they were agriculturists in pre-Columbian days.

The Terena now describe their economic life in the Chaco as having been based on agriculture, hunting, fishing, collecting, and raiding. This shift away from an emphasis on agriculture is understandable. The Chaco with comparatively greater sources of wild food plants, fish, and game than existed in the tropical forest, offered not only the resources but a stimulus for their use. In addition, the practice of agriculture in the Chaco was not the same as in the rain forest. The long drought period in the Chaco demanded a storable surplus not necessary in a region where annual rainfall is more evenly distributed. Above all, the Terena came into contact with Chaco tribes that depended principally upon hunting, fishing, and collecting, and a mutual exchange of economic customs seems to have taken place. When the Terena took over the horse and the practice of hunting and raiding their neighbors on horseback, dependence

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especially parrots. Live parrots are kept in the villages and carefully raised for their feathers. They know the art of making parrots produce yellow feathers as has been mentioned in another section. Great herds of wild pigs feed in the fields and do great damage to the potato and manioc crops. The Chaná retaliate by hunting the thieves and eating their tasty flesh. They also do the same with deer, ant-bear, fox, hare, and similar four-footed animals. Monkeys, being great robbers of fruit, cause damage for which they have to pay dearly, as many are killed, their meat replacing the stolen fruits. [Sanchez Labrador, 1910–17, vol. 2, p. 258.]

SHELTER

Terena houses, *ovokúti*, were built in a circle surrounding a central plaza called *nóneovokúti*. Villages, which varied in size, were built near sources of water and cultivable land. In the final stages of their stay in the Chaco, villages were not very permanent, as the Terena were on the move. The village, *oneu*, was not only a dwelling place but was also the primary political unit and the center of ceremonial life. Each household had its cultivated plot outside the village, and if these plots were at some distance from the village temporary brushwood shelters were thrown up for the night. The size and disposition of the houses gave no indication of the organization of the Terena into moieties or of the social importance of the chiefs.

As the Terena no longer remember the type of house which they used in the Chaco, we must depend upon historical sources. Even historical sources give us but an indirect description of the Terena house. Sánchez Labrador[1] gives us a description of a Chaná house, and as he states that the Terena belonged to the Chaná people and lived near them there is some justification in assuming that the Terena house resembled that of the Chaná:

The Chaná houses differ in type from Christian ones. Each house is from 16 to 20 yards (varas) long and 8 yards wide. The form of their structure is an arch, which is not supported by center pillars or columns. To sustain it, they use relatively long, thick sticks which make up the wall, the upper ends of which are curved inwards and tied together, but so that they do not touch. The height is about 5 or 6 yards. The houses have no ridges for the part which should be covered by the ridge is left open in order to let in light and to let out the smoke. That is why they do not close the arch completely. The whole framework is covered with a kind of thick long reed which they weave in a curious manner and place over the frame except for the opening. [Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 275–276.]

1 [Work published in 1910–17, See bibliography, p. 69 -- Analyst]

/14 cont./

[12] [114] [127] had to be subjected to a less systematic and less rigorous investigation in view of the short time available. Our stay in Cachoeirinha permitted us, above all, to work on the reconstruction of the traditional culture, though always with the help of bibliographic sources. Nevertheless, the basic procedure to which we resorted for the observation and recording of the social interaction between the Terêna and our society, coincides at various points with the "control-group" method mentioned by Audrey Richards and particularly suitable for comprehensive studies in so far as it permits us to single out the relative importance of each [009] socio-cultural variable in the complex (3). /15/ With reference

3. "I adopted, as a result of experiments, a certain technique of observing and recording culture change. This process I have described in concrete detail. It can be roughly divided into three stages: (a) The making of a rough reconstruction of tribal life in pre-European days by comparing the narratives of the old men of the tribe with the facts of daily life actually observed. (b) The comparison of different communities, in this case villages, in which contact with Europeanism has been more or less extensive--the method of geographical sampling, in fact. (c) The collection of facts in the form of case-histories to show the extent and the variety of contact change." (1938:58; cf. also Fortes, 1938:67.) /Cited in English./

[21]

/15 cont./ With reference
123 to the techniques used, from "participant observation" to the
125 use of questionnaires, we decided to mention them whenever necessary, thus endeavoring to make clear to the reader the origin and method of collecting the data analyzed.

128 As for its structure, the essay is divided into eight
[127] chapters: the first four were written on the basis of a bibliographic investigation, while the last four represent an attempt to describe the present situation of the Terêna and to interpret the process of socio-cultural change on the basis of the formulation of the problem of their assimilation with the regional neo-Brazilian population. Obviously they constitute the most important part of the work, as an introduction to which the first four chapters were written, namely: I) "The Terêna, A Guaná Subgroup"--which aims to identify the population studied; II) "The Nature of Intertribal Interaction"--in which we attempt to analyze the type of relations between the great Guaná and Mbayá-Guaikurú groups; III) "Profile of the Traditional Culture"--which is a brief account of the pattern of the ancient Terêna-Guaná culture; IV) "History of Interethnic Relations"--a study of the waves of settlement in southern Mato Grosso on the part of our society and the consequences of that pioneering process
[127] in the modification of the regional native situation; V) "Present-day Configuration of Terêna Local Groups"--a record of the most significant episodes in the history of each local group (with the aid of the oldest informants in the community) and of whatever could be subjected to quantification, these methods being combined with bibliographic sources (chiefly SPI reports); VI) "Socio-cultural Variations among Terêna Communities"--a comparative examination of the data presented in the previous chapter, in an attempt to ascertain the emerging variables, in order to indicate the pattern of modern tribal behavior; VII) "Acculturation and Mobility"--as two facets of the assimilation process, they provide the title for the most theoretical chapter in this work, in so far as it deals with a formulation of the conceptual system (used in the interpretation of a process)

G M 175 648 571 /38 cont./

and adherence to norms."
E. T. Hiller, 1947:151.
/Cited in English./

G M 175 648 571 177 extent may be generalized to the Guaná as a whole, characterizing an entire period in which relations between representative parts of both groups assumed systematic and continuous forms, which resulted in a process of intertribal acculturation, which must be taken into account if we are to understand Terêna (Guaná) traditional culture.

/39/ III. Profile of the Traditional Culture

G 121 128 Our purpose in this chapter is to give a brief outline of the traditional Terêna-Guaná culture, in order to convey a better understanding of the relations which took place between those Indians and the Euro-American society in the process of settling in southern Mato Grosso. The difficulties that the historical reconstruction presents have already been mentioned in the preceding chapters. A few words should still be added regarding the criterion adopted in the selection of the cultural complexes analyzed.

G 121 [[27]] Realizing it would be impossible to provide a picture, no matter how simple, of the total culture of those tribal groups, we decided to select the aspects of the traditional culture that were of greatest interest to the chroniclers and are thus better documented in the available bibliography.(55) Those /aspects/ that

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55. Our field experiences will serve, in this chapter, merely as auxiliary data, for the "tribal memory," although actively stimulated by us, proved very poor of little or